

## THIS I BELIEVE

Being left out is a painful thing. The feeling that you don't exist, like you are a passer-by on this earth, watching the rest of the world revolve and pass by. The disappointment when you smile and no one smiles back, you wave and no one waves back. Being left-out is a heart piercing thing. I believe in never excluding anyone, no matter how different they are.

I am sure that we have all experienced exclusion in one way or another. When it comes down to it, the main reason why people are excluded is because they are misunderstood by others. People do not understand them and so they keep away from those who are excluded, afraid if they get too close, others will find them strange and exclude them as well.

This happened to one of my friends a few years ago. At that time, everyone did not know one another but after a few weeks, we were all more comfortable and familiar with each other. However, there was this girl who was plump and according to some who had talked to her, she seemed bossy and arrogant. This rumour spread throughout the class. Slowly but steadily, the class grew distant from her and didn't talk to her unless necessary.

The class didn't realise that we were hurting her until she burst into tears during a dance class when no one wanted to group with her. We sat there awkwardly as she cried, not knowing what to do, none of us daring to step forward to comfort her. That dance class was the moment where I realised the pain that people experienced when excluded was so deep and piercing. It made me reflect on my actions towards this girl. I never actually knew or understood her, yet I judged her based on what other people said. I felt disgusted and disappointed at myself.

I took a bold step and decided to start talking to her and try to make friends. At first, when my classmates saw me talking to this girl, they thought I had gone mad. To be honest, I was having personal doubts if I was doing the right thing. But as I got to know her, I realised that she was a really kind and friendly girl, who was forgiving and willing to sacrifice for her friends. Furthermore, when my classmates saw us together, they became open towards her and she became more included in class.

This experience has opened my eyes and taught me so much. We should not judge others, until you have gotten close and understood that person. Without experiencing the true side of people, you can never know if things are as they seem, or if they are just unfounded rumours. You might be surprised. Most importantly, never let others feel excluded or discriminated, always try your best to make that person welcome and included. Everybody wants to feel accepted and wanted, so why not do it?